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ABSTRACT

Methodology related to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development has been continuously refined by creation and evaluation of additional research instruments. Instruments have been tested at summer scoring workshops presented by Kohlberg and his staff at the Center for Moral Education, Harvard University, in 1972, 1973, and 1976. Instruments include: (1) a standard-form scoring system to redefine the stages of moral development at a structural level and distinguish more clearly between issues and concerns; (2) a structural interviewing system which penetrates beyond a subject's opinions, attitudes, and beliefs to basic reasoning or justification patterns; and (3) a standard moral-interview format, which directs the subject to make the choice at the beginning of each dilemma. Many problems related to interviewer misperception of values placed by the subject on a particular issue have been alleviated by asking the subject to weight the values. Other problems encountered by participants at scoring workshops relate to dominant-issue scoring. Participants should have fewer problems with scoring if they refer to Kohlberg's 1977 manual, average across elements within the governing norm, and consider unsolicited reasoning responses by the subject during the interview. The conclusion is that Kohlberg's moral development theory is constantly being improved as Kohlberg and other scholars work to make it more relevant to moral dilemmas. (Author/DB)

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DEVELOPMENTS IN KOHLBERG'S THEORY AND SCORING OF MORAL DILEMMAS

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OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 6

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Foreword

Lisa Kuhmerker, Hunter College, CUNY, here makes an up-to-date analysis of the methodology developed by Lawrence Kohlberg and colleagues to measure his stages of moral development. As most educators are aware, Kohlberg, Director of the Center for Moral Education at Harvard University, is a leading theoretician, advocate, and practitioner of the developmental approach to moral education. Dr. Kuhmerker, the editor of Moral Education Forum and President of the Association for Moral Education-Eastern Region, has been a participant in many of the Kohlberg activities.

In this paper the author traces the development of a standard-form scoring system for the analysis of the moral-judgment interview developed by the Kohlberg team. She then moves on to describe and highlight the interview and scoring process, including consideration of the purpose of "structural" interviewing; issues, norms, and elements in the Kohlberg terminology; substages within stages; and guidelines for dominant-issue scoring. Finally, Dr. Kuhmerker sketches several new directions, chiefly modifications of the Kohlberg theory proposed by Kohlberg himself and by his colleagues.

In discussing these recent trends in Kohlberg methodology and content, Dr. Kuhmerker brings us abreast of a fertile and important approach to moral education.

Developments in Kohlberg's Theory and Scoring of Moral Dilemmas

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Introduction

The sequencing of modes of reasoning about moral dilemmas has represented the study of half a lifetime for Lawrence Kohlberg. The refinement of a methodology for the measurement of this sequential development has been a strenuous and frustrating task for Kohlberg and his co-workers as well as for the philosophers, psychologists, and practitioners who have tried to understand and apply his techniques.

Kohlberg discovered structure and sequence in the way human beings approach real and hypothetical dilemmas. His staging of sequential levels of moral reasoning linked moral-development research to the theory and research of John Dewey and Jean Piaget. It showed that moral development, like all learning, depended on interaction between the organism and the environment. It showed that moral learning was not a matter of social imitation, but that each person constructed and reconstructed his/her view of the world, that the cognition of one phase of a person's life experience became "re-cognized" with each emerging level of maturity.

These powerful ideas have given a tremendous stimulus to researchers in all aspects of social reasoning and behavior. Just as Freud's place

in the field of psychoanalysis is assured whether or not many of his ideas have been discarded or transformed by subsequent research, so Kohlberg's place as "the father of modern moral-development theory" is assured whether or not his stage theory becomes modified in the future, and whether or not a new generation of researchers finds better (and simpler) ways of tuning in to the structure of people's reasoning or behavior.

Still, the refinement of methodology for the measurement of moral development is the primary means through which Kohlberg can validate this theory. He offers three research instruments for this purpose: a standard moral-interview format, "structural" interviewing techniques, and a standard-form scoring system.

The Development of Scoring Systems

The newly developed "Standard Scoring System," also identifiable as the "Concern Scoring System," is the third structural method for the analysis of the moral-judgment interview that has been developed by Kohlberg and his staff at the Center for Moral Education.

Each year, in preparation for the summer scoring workshops, the Center's staff brings together the current Interview and Scoring Guide (such as Kohlberg, 1971, and Kohlberg, 1976) with sample protocols, scoring sheets and other auxiliary material. Sold to each participant as a total packet, this material is generally referred to as "The Manual" or the "Scoring Manual" for that year. There is some overlap in content from year to year, but the 1972 Manual and the 1976 Manual referred to in this analysis reflect distinct differences in the scoring technique.

The earliest method, the "Ideal Type Rating" published in 1958,

combined the use of story scoring and sentence scoring. It was based on equating the content of responses and attitudes toward each of the dilemmas, looking at the patterns of responses within each stage as if they constituted an ideal type or composite photograph. When Kohlberg applied this method to the scoring of longitudinal cases, he found a number of deviations from the notion of invariant sequence.

This led Kohlberg and his associates to make two basic changes. First they did some redefining of the stages at a structural level. Second, the rating was also made more structural; that is, the rater did not orient so much to the content. The method systematically tried to control for content by scoring in terms of each of the 10 moral issues but left it to the rater to pool material from a number of stories on a given issue.

The second phase of development in the scoring technique (1971) analyzed response units that were smaller than the story of the moral dilemma, but larger than single sentences. (For example of structural issue rating, see Porter, N., & Taylor, N., 1972.) This "Structural Issue Rating" yielded stage-consistent responses, but the descriptions of typical stage-specific responses in the 1972 Manual were very general. Scorers could not match the responses they elicited to specific statements in the 1972 Manual. Thus the system took a year or more to learn, and it was still difficult for independent scorers to reach agreement.

The "Standard Scoring System" limits itself to the scoring of two issues per dilemma. Thus the Heinz dilemma, for example, is now scored only on the issues of life and law. (The Heinz dilemma poses the question of whether a man should steal an overpriced drug he cannot afford to save

his wife's life.) The question of whether Heinz should be punished if he steals the drug has been made into a separate story whose two issues are law and punishment.

The new scoring system takes cognizance of subsidiary issues within a story. In the Heinz story, for example, the love of the husband for the wife (affiliation) is a concern. But in the actual scoring, the subsidiary issue of affiliation is scored with the life issue.

While the new scoring system includes only two issues per story, the 1976 Manual makes a new and sharp distinction between issues and concerns. Responses to the Heinz story can serve as examples. A subject might say, "He should save his wife and maybe later she'll save him." The issue in this case is life, the concern is positive reciprocity. If a subject were to say, "He shouldn't steal the drug because he'll get punished," the issue would again be life, but this time combined with concern for sanctions.

The content of the moral interviews has undergone relatively little change in the last 20 years. Kohlberg invented dilemmas that pose hypothetical conflict situations in which the subject must make one of two choices. (For example, in the Heinz dilemma, Heinz must either steal a drug to save his wife's life or obey the law.) The interview question is phrased so the subject must coordinate and weigh the importance of one set of values (such as life) in relation to another set of values (such as law) and apply these values to a specific situation.

Kohlberg still uses many of the dilemmas he posed to subjects in the 1950s. Changes and additions in the dilemmas selected for interview have had a triple purpose: (a) sharpening of the need for choice between two, and only two, alternative values; (b) selecting dilemmas that represent

moral conflicts about which preadolescents, adolescents, and adults are concerned in every culture; (c) selecting dilemmas that tap issues that are significant to persons at the higher levels of moral development.

It is the structure behind the content that has absorbed the attention of Kohlberg and his associates. What instrument, what scoring technique, will measure moral reasoning most effectively? How can the teaching of structural interviewing techniques become more standardized and simplified? And, finally, as the issues, norms, and elements are classified most accurately, what dimensions of moral reasoning, concern, and commitment are screened out by this selective process?

Manuscripts published by Kohlberg, his supporters, and his critics often have an air of finality that is absent in the free give-and-take of all moral-development workshops and of the scoring workshops in particular. In addition, there is always some lag between the cutting edge of a research field and the publication of data that enable others to evaluate the results and build on them. In the moral-development field, the literature about the theory is vast and rich, but detailed data about the scoring methodology have been dificult to obtain except by researchers who have had an opportunity to study at the Center for Moral Education.

Thus this article is an attempt to describe and highlight the interview and scoring process, not from the perspective of a specialist in scoring, but from that of an educator who has had the good fortune to take part in many of the conferences and workshops at the Center over the last six years.

Most of the data that follow come from notes and tapes collected at

the scoring workshops at Harvard University in the summers of 1972, 1973, and 1976. An interview with Lawrence Kohlberg following the scoring workshops helped to sharpen my awareness of the continuities and changes in the theory and practice and to elicit from Kohlberg some comments about new directions in their application.

Daniel Candee, Anne Colby, and John Gibbs have worked closely with Kohlberg on the development of definitive scoring manuals; they assume major roles in the workshops. Their unpublished manuscript Assessment of Moral Judgment Stages (1977) is helpful in sharpening the definitions of the interrelationships between dilemmas, issues, norms, and elements. The term elements is new and incorporates some of the protocol material categorized under concerns in the 1976 Manual. (Candee, D., Colby, A., & Gibbs, J., 1977, pp. 2-3).

Structural Interviewing

What is the purpose of structural interviewing? It is to penetrate beyond a subject's opinions, attitudes, or beliefs to the reasoning or justification which directs them. Thus it should:

1. explain to the subject the interview goal of trying to understand and bring out his or her underlying thinking on moral dilemmas;
2. ascertain that the subject fully understands a given dilemma before proceeding with questions on it;
3. encourage the subject to answer prescriptively rather than descriptively ("Do you think Heinz should steal the drug?");
4. enable the subject to reflect on her or his moral suppositions through probing ("What do you mean by justice?") (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977).

What characterizes a good dilemma? The first requirement is that the dilemma focus on an important issue which will elicit a "pro" or "con" action choice (e.g., in the Heinz dilemma the issue of life leads to a "pro" choice, and the issue of law to a "con" choice, in the matter of stealing a drug). In standardizing dilemmas and probe questions and constructing parallel forms, there is deliberate focus on two issues even when a third must be de-emphasized.

This separation of content into two units per story is somewhat arbitrary, since choice involves a cluster of values or issues for most subjects. In order to reflect this and still maintain the basic two-issue organization, the scoring system recognizes minor or subsidiary issues.

Values as issues can be distinguished from values as norms in several ways. The choice or general value being supported is the issue; the values brought to bear on the choice (property, authority, contract) are norms. Another means for clarifying the distinction is to see norms as values that are "in" the person. Issues, on the other hand, are external, "out there." They are social objects, institutions, or events that are relevant to the dilemma rather than the internal values (norms) of the individual (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977).

Issues, Norms, and Elements

How globally -- vs. how differentially -- should one analyze subjects' moral thinking? The strategy of Kohlberg, Candee, Colby, and Gibbs is to start very globally in the approach to the interview data and then become more refined. In practical terms this means that at the beginning of each dilemma, the subject is required to make a choice.

Analysis begins by grouping together the responses addressed to one or the other issue for the dilemma. Within the issue material, the particular values or objects of concern must be identified. For example, a subject who judges that Heinz should steal the drug may have as his object of concern the values of human life (life norm). The life norm is not the only possible object of concern, however. Primary value might be placed on love (affiliation norm), the value of obeying one's conscience (morality norm), or the recognition that the druggist misuses his discovery (property norm) (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977).

Thus within the response material under a given issue, such as the life issue in the Heinz dilemma, a subject may voice a single norm or as many as four. To put it another way, in supporting an issue the subject brings norms, such as property, authority or contract, to bear on that choice. Issues involve something external or "out there," that is, values as a social institution or event, but the norms that are brought to bear on the issues are largely a function of the values and beliefs "in" the subject. A subject must choose between two issues (law or life) but need not choose between either love or life, or love or contract as norms, because norms are always, in some sense, terminal values. However, while norms are terminal values in relation to issues, they are still in some sense instrumental values. Elements, in contrast, are terminal in relation to norms. They are the leitmotifs, the principles, on which our moral judgments rest. It is the principle (element) that gives value to the institution or norm; we value the principle of justice, not the Department of Justice.

Elements (principles) are general across situations and types of action. Property rights may be a norm in one situation and not in another; justice or human rights, the welfare element, are values in any situation (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977).

Substages

Within each stage there are qualitative differences in subject response that warrant the subdivision of stages into A and B substages. While both substages have the same social perspective, judgments at substage B are more equilibriated and reversible than their A counterparts. Central to all the B elements is the fairness orientation, a definition of rights in terms of what the self would expect in the role of the other, or in terms of the ideal of what should be expected.

The prototype of all B elements is the fairness orientation: what the self would expect in the role of the other, or in terms of the ideal of what should be expected. The justice orientation always presupposes taking the role of a person potentially being treated unfairly, of a person asking, "Why me?"

Judgments at substage B are concerned that perspectives and demands are balanced both among the parties involved and between authority groups and subordinate individuals. While substage A recognizes the duty as respecting a societally protected right to property, substage B balances that duty with potential benefits.

Not only does substage B make reciprocal the considerations at substage A, but considerations at substage B of a lower stage often become formalized at A of the next higher stage. For example, the

idea that an individual's affection for a loved one can generalize to all human beings (hence, an individual can "have a relationship" with all human beings) is first developed at stage 3B.

"WOULD IT BE AS RIGHT TO STEAL IT FOR A STRANGER AS FOR HIS WIFE?

Yes, a life is like love. You can love people who are not even close to you, strangers as well as those close to you. To give life is beautiful, to save life is the same.

(Stage: 3B; Issue: life; autonomy)

However, what was an extended feeling of affect at Stage 3B becomes codified value that should be recognized by law and society at Stage 4A:

SHOULD THE DOCTOR GIVE THE WOMAN THE DRUG THAT WOULD MAKE HER DIE SOONER?

The doctor should not give her the drug because it is always wrong to take a life. Human life is the highest value we have. It is sacred.

(Stage: 4A; Issue: life/having a right)" (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977, pp. 20-21).

Grouped under substage B are all the elements of fairness orientation that affirm the individual's autonomy and uniqueness. The other orientation which constitutes the B substage is mode C, the "Idealizing and Perfectionistic" mode. The key concepts here are that right actions are those which lead to the improvement or uplifting of the actor's own personality or are those which foster improvement in the quality of relations between groups of individuals.

So far there is no definitive procedure for rating a person's entire protocol to determine a substage score. The most reasonable technique would seem to be to characterize an individual according to his or her most frequently used substage, perhaps standardizing each substage response for the probability of its occurence across all subjects.

A Summary of Guidelines for Dominant-Issue Scoring

Participants at scoring workshops find dominant-issue scoring the most complex aspect of the interview-scoring technique. This is not necessarily the fault of the scoring instrument. Where ambiguity exists it is often the result of an incomplete exploration of the subject's beliefs during the interview. When the scorer is limited to working with the transcript of such an interview, Candee, Colby, and Gibbs (1977) suggest various strategies for scoring:

1. Stage-score only the norm/element moral judgment. This scoring is done by comparing interview reasoning with the criterion judgment in the 1977 Manual, considering the structural descriptions given in the criterion-judgment explications, and using the distinctions between parallel ideas at different stages to avoid mismatches.
2. In computing dominant-issue score, average across elements within governing norm and give the whole norm more weight. On the nonchosen issue, no choice-governing norm is identified, since most subjects do not present reasons in support of a choice they do not favor. Even those cases where choice-related and general reasoning can be identified on the nonchosen issue, no greater weight is given to the choice-related material.

3. Sometimes the subject does not give the highest reasoning he/she is capable of to questions that are posed in the interview. When the subject raises an issue unsolicited, by contrast, the reasoning is generally at his/her highest stage.

Because of the importance of obtaining a score for each of the standard issues and in order to prevent raters from labeling as unscorable the material which does not fit their theoretical preconceptions about structural moral-judgment stages, a "guess category" has been instituted for scoring issues which might otherwise seem unscorable by the standard form of the Manual (Candee, Colby, & Gibbs, 1977, pp. 29-30).

New Directions

How does Kohlberg view the growth and change of his moral development theory? First of all, he can generally be found in the midst of endless dialogues, examining, defending, and criticizing ideas and strategies. He is absorbed in the dialogue rather than defensive about a position. This is a mental stance that theorists looking in from the outside often find unexpected and puzzling. They attack Kohlberg's ideas like soldiers flinging themselves against an impregnable castle. But inside the Center for Moral Education, the atmosphere is informal and only partially organized. Visitors and novice staff who have done the homework of studying the published literature are encouraged to join in the kind of mental "messing around" that is the prerequisite for creative thought. Thus it is no surprise that some of the most persuasive suggestions for modifications in the theory have come from researchers and practitioners who work in or

near the Center.

Those who have struggled hardest to grasp the complexity of Kohlberg's theory and development of the hypothetical dilemmas are the very ones who finally conclude that new research must pay attention to actual decision-making. Crisis intervention in particular is a very important way of finding out how a person construes a real-life dilemma. Furthermore, helping the person to reconstruct the problem can become a significant means for personal growth.

Carol Gilligan, a collaborator with Kohlberg in some publications and a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is gathering data on crises in women's live. These lead her to question the universality of the issues Kohlberg employs in his stage definitions; she also questions whether the consistent structure revealed by her small sample is characteristic of a feminine or a human response, and whether her data point toward a different moral-development stage theory or uncover some broader truths about ego and personality development.

Gilligan's early data came from a study of 29 women caught in the real-life dilemma of choosing between abortion and raising a baby. The spontaneous responses of the pregnant women revealed an absolutely consistent structure. The issue at the preconventional level was survival -- there seemed to be no choice; focus was on the self, with others considered in the decision-making process only when they impinged on the self. Selfishness and responsibility were the key words in the transition to conventional morality, with conventional women defining themselves in terms of their capacity to care for other people. In the transition

to principled morality, a distinction between selfishness and self-concern begins to be made. When the self is included among the people for whom it is good to care, the issue becomes equality and the abortion dilemma becomes an issue of life versus life.

James Fowler, formerly a professor of religion at Boston College and now at Emory University , Atlanta , questions the assumption of Kohlberg and Rawls that everyone acts out of rational self-interest. He affirms that there is a tacit fiduciary-covenant structure. When we meet others we look at not only their specific characteristics but also at areas of shared commitment to a tacit covenant of expectations. In interviews he asks both children and adults to respond to open-ended questions rather than hypothetical dilemmas. He concludes that there is an epistemological identification of what is good and bad at every age level. Even the five-year-old already has an ethos of goodness. Fowler postulates that faith can be staged in much the same way as moral judgment.

Bill Puka, now teaching on the faculty of Trinity College (Connecticut), most directly questions Kohlberg's justice framework. Far from being the ultimate value, Puka characterizes justice as the midpoint between worst and best. It is the minimal condition; it sets lower limits on the civil treatment we give other people; it does not give advice on the best or most virtuous way to behave. Justice deals only with the morally permissible, not with the loving and enhancing.

Puka postulates that love can be staged, starting with a physical orientation where the person is attached to another in terms of the nurturance received, progressing to a midlevel where people are loved

for what they do, and leading to a principled level based on understanding and responsibility. Puka's view is Kohlberg's view "with something about virtues put in." He says that it is better to love people than to respect them, that there is more to life than solving conflicts. While justice must be two-directional, in Puka's view, love can be one-directional.

Kohlberg himself may modify his use of the six-stage framework for charting moral development. In his 1976 Manual he has collapsed Stages 5 and 6 and does not try to score Stage 6. With the Standardized Scoring Manual (1977) and its validation on the longitudinal data, Kohlberg has completed a task that has taken over 20 years: defining structural moral stages and empirically demonstrating their existence as something culturally universal. In the meantime, one important use of these concepts and methods is to assess educational change.

In the last five or six years, Kohlberg has begun to look at moral education not simply in terms of what stages in moral reasoning have to say about it but, also, so to speak, in terms of all the goals and processes that are involved in moral education. He is now concerned with taking up issues of content as well as of structure. He is interested in dealing with social environments in a more adequate way, dealing with the moral atmosphere or moral climate of institutions.

In the past few years the major difference in workshops from one year to the next has been in terms of improvements and changes in the method of scoring. It is hoped that the 1977 workshop will have clarified all the final details and that there will be no further changes thereafter. From that point on, Kohlberg foresees new directions for his work: assessing moral education and moral climate in schools, prisons, and other settings, rather than continuing with moral-judgment scoring as the focus.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

ETHICAL-CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (ECE) has as its objective the development of ECE programs and their introduction in schools (public, nonpublic, and parochial) across the nation wishing to undertake such activity. Common to all ECE programs is the following instructional goal: to teach students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions which will enable them to realize in action the civic ethics basic to American democratic traditions. Chief among these civic ethics are: caring for the interest of self and others; equal consideration for all persons; rational decision-making; and, by extension, liberty, justice, and equality. The program is based on school-community cooperation, a strategy which explicitly calls for flexibility and adaptation of ECE approaches according to local community needs and perceptions. The ECE effort will promote and support state and local educational agencies in building the capacity to attain the program objective. Public policy, theory-building, research, development, and dissemination are seen as supporting task-force areas.

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The United Church of Christ
The United Methodist Church
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

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